



Testimony of the Mayor and Council of Rockville
SB 609 – Residential Leases – Uses of Algorithmic Device by Landlord to
Determine Rent – Prohibition
SUPPORT

Thank you to Chair Smith and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee. I am Monique Ashton, Mayor of Rockville, and I thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 609, which would prohibit a landlord from using certain algorithmic software to set residential rents. We thank Senator Love for sponsoring this important and timely legislation.

The federal government has sued property management software company RealPage for colluding to raise residential rental prices. Eight multi-family properties in the City of Rockville have been identified as being managed by companies named in the lawsuit. Together, this represents nearly 2,000 market-rate apartments in Rockville – meaning there are nearly 2,000 families who may be paying higher rents than needed due to unfairly set rents. Estimates from the D.C. metro area approximate that landlords' use of RealPage has cost the average renter an additional \$112 a month.

The Rockville Mayor and Council take the issue of housing affordability seriously. As of the 2020 Census, 45% of Rockville households are renters, a percentage which continues to grow. These residents would greatly benefit from the additional protections in the legislation against price collusion for residential rents.

According to a January 2025 poll conducted by the Washington Post and the University of Maryland, 23% of Maryland voters cite affordable housing as the biggest problem facing the state. There are many actions needed to address this massive challenge, one of which should be ensuring that rents are set competitively. To collude is unfair, abusive, and deceptive to tenants.

In conclusion, strong and fair tenant protections will make Maryland and Rockville a more affordable, desirable place to live. For these reasons, we urge the Committee to provide SB 609 with a favorable report. Thank you.